

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

IMERYS

Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Imerys Improves Processes Using 5S Techniques

Client Profile:

Imerys, established in the late 1800s, operates three facilities in Dalton, Marble Hill, and Whitestone, Georgia. The Marble Hill plant employs 109 people and operates an underground mine that processes calcium carbonate into various particle sizes for several markets, such as drywall, paints, fillers, and extenders.

Situation:

Imerys became interested in applying the 5S method of industrial housekeeping--sort, set in order, shine, standardize, and sustain--after attending an international standards course facilitated by the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Georgia MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate. The company requested an on-site visit and follow-up meeting.

Solution:

Georgia MEP discussed opportunities to deploy lean manufacturing practices at Imerys and conducted an on-site value stream mapping project, which identifies areas of improvement throughout the manufacturing process. While conducting this phase of the project, the company realized that defective bags caused a tremendous amount of wasted product. Soon after, management began working with its supplier to find better quality bags. Reject percentages on the packaging line went from 35 percent to under 5 percent, relating directly back to cost savings and production increases.

Georgia MEP spent four days on-site with Imerys management to implement the 5S project, cleaning and organizing the production area and developing a set of procedures and habits to sustain the project. A room used to store unused items represented both a major source of clutter and a safety hazard for fork-lift drivers. After identifying the problem, Georgia MEP suggested the demolition of the wall that created the room, and it was easily completed within the hour. Soon Imerys regained additional floor space, improved efficiency, and created a safer workplace environment for its employees.

Results:

Reduced percentages of rejected product on the packaging line from 35 to 5 percent.

Regained manufacturing floor space that had been used for storage.

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Improved efficiency.
Improved workplace safety.

Testimonial:

"We all went out there and implemented 5S in an actual area of the plant and we didn't just sit in a classroom all day. That was the biggest plus to the whole program. The crew the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership had out here did a great job as far as pitching in and not just directing or trying to teach. I think that's what got everyone else in the plant to buy into 5S and sustain it."

Todd Swanger, Operations Manager